

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

The Examiner contends that the two inventions are distinct, because the apparatus covered in the Application can be employed in a materially different process. In response, Applicant is not arguing that the apparatus does not have a wide field of use. However, Applicant does contend that the illustrations provided by the Examiner to support his contention do not seem entirely on point (see page 2 of the Office Action). For example, the Examiner appears to be noting that a materially different process would be one in which the melted, liquid metal would not be solidified in the mold, but could be transported to another location. That might be the case, but such a possibility does not appear to be outside the scope of Applicant's independent apparatus claims. As another illustration, the Examiner appears to indicate that the apparatus could be used to process non-metallic materials. While Applicant might not entirely discount that possibility, it should be noted that the cold hearth vessel of the apparatus is clearly meant to hold liquid metal (claim 1(a)). Thus, Applicant respectfully submits that the supporting illustrations supporting the concept of two separate inventions are not entirely on point.

Moreover, it appears that the invention covered by the two Groups can be searched and examined as a unitary concept. In other words, there would be no special burden put on the Patent Office, in allowing all of the claims to remain in a single case. Thus, withdrawal of the Restriction Requirement is requested.

Sincerely,



Francis T. Coppa  
Reg. No. 31,154

General Electric Company  
Building K1, Room 3A67  
One Research Circle  
Niskayuna, New York 12309  
Telephone: (518) 387-7530  
Date: 9/1/06